

An amendment by Mr. FRANKS of Arizona regarding the conduct of studies of missile defense;

An amendment by Mrs. CAPITO regarding the submission of a report on the implementation of the Office of Rural Health;

An amendment by Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey regarding funding for extended care facilities;

An amendment by Mrs. DRAKE regarding a report on pending disability benefit claims;

An amendment by Mr. BROWN of South Carolina regarding a report on ALS;

An amendment by Mr. HALL of New York regarding awards for certain VA employees;

An amendment by Mrs. MUSGRAVE or Mr. SALAZAR regarding the Pinon Canyon maneuver site;

An amendment by Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas regarding medical centers in underserved urban areas;

An amendment by Mrs. BLACKBURN regarding e-commerce;

An amendment by Mr. DONNELLY regarding implementation of GAO recommendations related to claims processing;

An amendment by Ms. HARMAN or Mr. UPTON regarding purchase of light bulbs;

An amendment by Mr. PEARCE regarding reimbursement of travel expenses for VA employees;

An amendment by Mr. CONAWAY or Mrs. DRAKE regarding deficit spending;

An amendment by Mrs. CAPITO regarding interoperable medical records;

An amendment by Mr. MORAN of Kansas regarding funding for VA medical services;

An amendment by Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida regarding funding for the Gainesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center;

An amendment by Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico regarding funding for service dogs for disabled veterans;

An amendment by Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico regarding funding to create a commission concerning women veterans;

An amendment by Mr. MORAN of Kansas regarding funding for certain VA offices;

An amendment by Mr. SMITH of Nebraska or Mr. SALAZAR regarding funding for the VA Office of Rural Health; and

An amendment or amendments by Mr. EDWARDS regarding funding levels.

Each such amendment may be offered only by the Member named in this request or a designee, shall be considered as read, shall not be subject to amendment except that the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations and the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Related Agencies each may offer one pro forma amendment for the purpose of debate; and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

Each amendment shall be debatable for 10 minutes, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent. An amendment shall be considered to fit the description stated in this request if it addresses in whole or in part the object described.

When the Committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

During consideration in the House of H.R. 2642 pursuant to this order, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker; and

(2) House Resolution 480 is laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont?

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I rise to congratulate my very good friend from Vermont for moving through this so expeditiously. I want to say we are very supportive of moving ahead with this very, very important piece of legislation which is designed to focus on our Nation's veterans. We look forward to moving as expeditiously as possible to completion of this.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I withdraw my reservation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont?

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2462, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of today and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2642.

□ 1155

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2642) making appropriations for military

construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, with Mr. LYNCH in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, we now have before us the fiscal year 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill which will ensure the largest increase in VA health care spending in the 77-year history of the Veterans Affairs. There is \$6 billion over the 2007 level of funding, and \$3.8 billion over the President's request for 2008.

Mr. Chairman, this bill sends a clear message to America's servicemen and -women, their families and our veterans that a grateful Nation deeply respects their service and sacrifice.

The national commander of the Disabled American Veterans, Bradley Barton, went to the heart of what this bill is all about when he described it as "keeping faith with America's veterans."

The bill means our servicemen and -women will have more effective training facilities which will save lives and help them carry out their military missions. It means our military families, who sacrifice so much for our Nation, will have better housing, health care and day-care facilities.

This bill means we will honor our veterans in a meaningful way by providing them the health care and benefits we promised them when they put on our Nation's uniform.

It means we will have more qualified doctors and nurses to improve medical services to our veterans and to reduce waiting times for doctors' appointments. For veterans with traumatic brain injury, PTSD, mental health care issues and lost limbs, it means renewed hope to rebuild their lives.

For homeless veterans, it means the dignity of not having to live on the streets, and it means hope for the future. For veterans in rural areas and those who serve in the Guard and Reserves, this bill means needed care will be closer to home. For the 400,000 veterans, including combat wounded vets, who are having to wait far too long to have their benefits cases reviewed, it means over 11,000 new VA case workers to reduce the unacceptable delays in receiving earned benefits.

Mr. Chairman, before I mention some of the details of this bill, I want to express some much-deserved thanks. I want to begin with Chairman DAVE OBEY, the gentleman from Wisconsin, for his unwavering commitment and